

Geographic Review Panel 3 – American River/Eastside Tribes

Proposal number: 2001-K218 **Short Proposal Title:** Butte Creek, Big Chico

1. Applicability to CALFED ERP Goals and Implementation Plan and CVPIA priorities, and relevance to ERP and CVPIA priorities for your region. High (see comment under the next criterion). The sampling program that would be continued by the proposal has also provided the basis for a new understanding of the juvenile life history of spring-run in Butte Creek (most emigrate as fry) and of the potential importance of the Sutter Bypass as rearing habitat for juvenile spring-run as well as fall-run.

2. Linkages/coordination with previously funded projects or other restoration activities in your region. Strong. Butte Creek has properly been the object of major restoration efforts to remove diversion dams or improve ladders, improve flows, etc. Some monitoring of this sort is necessary to assess the effectiveness of these efforts.

3. Feasibility, especially the project's ability to move forward in a timely and successful manner. High: This is mostly a continuation of an existing program, which has been well executed. The concerns raised by one reviewer about whether release of hatchery fall or late fall-run fish in Sutter Bypass would be allowed seems overstated.

4. Qualifications of the applicants and others involved in implementing the proposed project. Kathy Hill is leaving the project. Tracy McReynolds seems to be doing a good job but has less of a track record.

5. Local involvement (including environmental compliance). Not always applicable to a monitoring project, but good. The Butte Creek Conservancy is not always easy to work with, but the applicants seem to have managed. The connections with Chico State and with the Spring-Run Workgroup help with outreach and dissemination of information to the locals.

6. Cost. The cost appears reasonable.

7. Cost sharing. The cost sharing appears reasonable.

8. Additional comments. The independent technical reviewers and TARP properly identified shortcomings in this proposal. The applicants have a good record for performance, however, which tends to balance these shortcomings, which are mainly errors of omission. The report of past work (Hill and Webster 1999) is straightforward in presentation of data and honest about the limitations imposed by the methods and attributes of the field site. Importantly, the preliminary work on rearing in the Sutter Bypass, apparently motivated by DWR's work in the Yolo Bypass and done with existing funding, represents an unusually prompt response to new information and ideas. The hypotheses regarding the Sutter Bypass are extremely important and clearly enough stated, contrary to the TARP's question.

Possible improvements to the project: The applicants should consider developing relationships with academic biologists that could strengthen interpretation of the data. Collecting scales and otoliths, as suggested by one reviewer, would be a good amendment to the study plan and probably could be done within the existing funding. The applicants should consider adding tests of the sampling efficiency of the screw traps (which should be high for the trap at the Parrott-Phelan Dam, based on its situation).

Improvements to the proposal: The proposal, as a proposal, could be much improved. Most of the questions raised by reviewers have answers that should have been included. For example, the rationale for blocking fall-run at the Parrott-Phelan or Durham Mutual dam could have been described easily enough (it appears that recent passage improvements allow fall-run adults to reach the area of traditional spring-run spawning above the Parrott-Phelan Dam, so there has been overlapping spawning in recent years), but it was not.

Similarly, the adaptive management component of the model is not well described. As noted above, at least part of it is necessary to allow earlier CALFED projects on the stream to be evaluated. Although this cannot be done in a rigorous way, comparison of returns in the various spring-run streams, together with trends in returns in Butte Creek, should allow some assessment. This is described, but farther back in the proposal under the section on applicability to ERP goals and CVPIA priorities, where some of the reviewers may have missed it. Collaboration with academics may also be helpful in preparing other proposals in the future

The applicants have been unusually cooperative with non-agency investigators.

They properly note the utility of data on non-salmonids that will be collected.

Regional Ranking

Panel Ranking: High

Provide a brief explanation of your ranking: This proposal is for a continuation of a monitoring program that has been well run and has collected important information.